

October 3, 2020

Dear Judge Crenshaw,

We are Mitchell and Virginia Bryant, parents of Mark M. Bryant. I retired from Austin Peay State University Maintenance Dept. where I was the paint crew supervisor. My wife Virginia is retired from Cornerstone Financial Credit Union where she was a teller, including a time as Vault Teller. We have been married for forty-seven years.

Mark grew up in a Christian home where attending church regularly and living according to Biblical teachings was its foundation. Much of our social life was church activities. We spent a lot of time at soccer practices and games in support of our children. We enjoyed camping as a family. Mark recently surprised his mother with a four day camping trip in the Smoky Mountains.

Mark is our youngest child. He has two older sisters. Mark weighed over ten pounds at birth. He was always the tallest and biggest child in his school classes, yet he never bullied others, but rather protected them from being bullied. His gentle and kind nature made him a friend to all. He is a loving and protective son and brother, and a truly loyal friend. He is also very intelligent

Mark loves football. He played on youth, middle school and high school teams. He was an unselfish player, always striving to act in the best interest of the team. He separated his shoulder in his first high school practice, but fought his way back to health with eight rehab sessions a week. His hard work resulted in his missing only two games. Watching his games was another fun family activity.

Mark started working at the age of seven when our family began the job of cleaning our large church building. As he grew, he took on bigger responsibilities. While still in high school, he started working at a local carwash. By consistent attendance, willingness to learn new jobs, and a mature level of responsibility, he became Assistant Manager. Soon after, at the age of eighteen years, he was able to buy his own house, which he still owns today.

I suffer from chronic depression and anxiety of thirty years time. There was a time when I went into a psychotic episode at home due to a bad reaction to a prescription medicine. I started rampaging through the house, punching holes in the walls and tearing down the staircase railing. After EMTs refused to transport me, my wife called for police. When the officer arrived, I was still stomping through the house and shouting. Mark got me in a bear hug and begged me to settle down. He did not want to hurt me, but was afraid he would. The police officer later called Mark the hero of the situation. He told him, "You did everything right."

A few years later, we bought a lot in Eagles Rest, a Stewart County community at Kentucky Lake. I planned to have a house built as we neared retirement. Mark had worked on a framing crew for a few years, and he offered to frame it for us. As it worked out, a family friend who had extensive construction experience was able to ramrod the foundation, Mark did the framing, and I helped however I could. We hired someone to do the plumbing and electric after the three of us built the interior walls and hung the sheetrock. It was wonderful to work with Mark and see how capable he was. It was a time I will always treasure. And now we have a family hideaway in the woods to enjoy with family and friends.

Our son Mark is a good man. We are proud of him. He loves and cares for his parents and others in a hundred ways large and small. In the incident at the jail, things went wrong. His equipment (the restraint chair) failed him. His training and experience were inadequate to handle the extraordinarily strong, drug-fueled inmate Norris. But he kept his people safe, and he did no lasting harm to inmate Norris, who died fourteen months later from a drug overdose administered by his own hand. Does Norris not bear responsibility for all that he did? I will never understand why the jail did not have a policy to call the Mobile Crisis Team for this situation that occurred after the day shift nurse had left for the day. The Mobile Crisis Team exists for just these kinds of issues.

We thank you for this opportunity to advocate for our son. This process has gone on for four long years and has punished Mark and all who love him for that entire time. If you have the power to show leniency to Mark in his sentencing, we pray that you will do so.

Respectfully,
Mitchell and Virginia Bryant

Chief Judge Waverly Crenshaw
U.S. District Court
Middle District of Tennessee

Re: Mark M. Bryant

Dear Judge Crenshaw,

My name is Linda J. Earp. I am retired from AT&T. I am a friend of Mark's mother, Virginia Bryant. I am 71 years old.

In the spring of 2019, I tripped while working in my yard, and I fell. I broke my left (my dominant) arm, a severe and complex break. I had to have surgery to put a rod into one of the bones. I even had to move in with my daughter for a time. Mark's mom told him about my injury.

Now understand, Mark had never even met me. But, because of the kind of person he is, and knowing that I, like his mother, am an avid gardener, he offered to help me in any way that he could.

Normally, I can wrangle my own large bags of potting soil, mulch, etc, and manage to do whatever I want done as far as digging new beds and planting plants in the ground. Because of my injury, I had to change my plans. I decided to do most of my gardening that year in large pots. But I could not lift the 40 lb. potting soil bags and empty them into the large pots. I told my friend, Mark's mom, about my problem. She called Mark, and he immediately called me. This outstanding young man came and placed the pots where I wanted them, filled the pots, moved my supplies close to be in easy reach, and generally did all my heavy lifting. He noticed that I was having trouble getting around on the stairs from my back door. So he came back another day and built me two sturdy hand rails so I could be safe. He would not let me pay him for any of his work. It all meant so much to me. He was my angel.

Please do not put Mark in prison. Our society is much better off with Mark among us, doing good and continuing to work at his job. Mark is a fine example of a good citizen.

Thank you for hearing me.

Linda J. Earp